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From Errand Boy to Lawyer;

or, BOUND TO BE AT
THE TOP.

By R. T. EMMET.



Blivens held his foe down with a vise like grip. The villain was unable to move. And then with flushed faces and panting breath, the two men gazed into each other's eyes savagely and with hatred.

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From Errand Boy to Lawyer;

OR,

BOUND TO BE AT THE TOP.

By R. T. EMMET,

Author of "Out With Kit Carson. A Story of the Early Days of Kansas," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. CODMAN'S STORY.

"WANTED.—An errand boy, between fifteen and eighteen years of age, ready and willing. None but a capable boy need apply between the hours of seven and ten in the morning.

"LAWYER ANDERSON,
"No. — Broadway."

Charlie Codman, a bright boy, wonderfully well matured at the age of sixteen, was reading the "want" columns of a newspaper, and repeated this aloud to his mother, who sat near in an arm-chair, engaged in sewing. The room was an humble one in the top story of a tenement-house in East Twentieth street, in the great city of New York.

Mrs. Codman, a pleasant-featured lady, who showed unmistakably in her fine figure and gentle ways that she had once been better favored of fortune, looked up and smiled at the earnestness of her only child; this overgrown boy, who is to figure as the hero of our story.

"There mother; there is my chance. I shall go and get that position at once. Oh, you need not say no. I am old enough and plenty strong to work, and my earnings will be something, mother. At least, enough to pay for my clothes, so that you will not have to work so hard."

Something like a sob came from Mrs. Codman's bosom, and she wiped a suspicious moisture away from her eyes.

"It is very strange, Charlie, but I cannot somehow bear the thought of your going to work for a living."

"Why not, mother?" asked Charlie. "I certainly must object to being brought up to a life of indolence."

"Neither would I have you," exclaimed the mother quickly. "But oh, Charlie, it has been my cherished ambition that you should enter college."

"Pshaw! I guess there are smart men to-day who have never entered college."

"That may be true. Yet it is a great aid to any man to have a good education. It all would have come to pass happily enough if—if your father had not been defrauded in his rights in that railroad contract. It was his death. Ah, I cannot bear to think of it. Our fine home, our fortune, all swept away in a day. It was a bitter blow."

Charlie Codman arose from his seat, and coming to his mother's side, threw his arms about her neck.

"My dear mother," he cried, earnestly, "now that the disaster has come, is it not better for me to go out and strive to win back that fortune, than to loaf around home, or even go to college, and have you work yourself to death to pay my way? I think so."

Mrs. Codman kissed her boy fondly.

"I suppose I am foolish," she said. "But you have been the central object of my dreams. I had pictured a great future for you,

Charlie; but, alas, I have lived to learn the lesson of disappointment."

"Mother, tell me how was it that father lost his fortune?"

"It was in this way," replied Mrs. Codman, with a sigh. "Your father was a wealthy man, and I had money in my own right. It seemed that we need never want during the course of our lives, if we only handled our money judiciously. For years we lived happily, with plenty, but there came an unwise moment when your father was drawn into the scheme of building a railroad in the northern section of New York. The concern was capitalized for a number of million dollars. The road was to be called the Northern New York Railroad. Your father believed that besides making a greater fortune than he had, he would become a public benefactor by backing up the building of this road.

"Before any of the stock could be floated or put upon the market, it was necessary to show a stipulated cash capital. To furnish this your father pledged his fortune and mine. For a time Wall street was alive with the sale of the stock of the Northern New York Railroad. A few hundred miles of the road was built and business begun."

"All might have been well, but one very important fact was overlooked. The very wealthy New York Central Railroad was able, by building a slight extension, to enter into active competition with the new road, and, reducing rates, plunged it hopelessly into bankruptcy and ruin."

"That was a dark day in Wall street when your father came home and brought the dreadful tidings that the enterprise was a failure, hundreds of stockholders were losers, and we ourselves were minus our fortune. Had this been all we might have buried the affliction, and found solace in the mutual comforts that we were spared each to the other, for, terrible as it is, it could never be so hard to lose wealth as a life."

Mrs. Codman paused, and it seemed for a moment as though she had lost the power of speech. Great sobs burst from her bosom, but finally she summoned sufficient strength to continue:

"Yes, my boy, it would be hard for you to realize how dreadful that blow was. At noon, while your father and I were at lunch, two officers came to the house and arrested him. It was like a bolt from a clear sky, and I fell fainting on the floor. They took him to the Tombs, and as nobody would offer bail, he was held there for trial upon the charge of forgery of a certain bond which involved the fortunes of several men of high standing.

"Was he guilty? As there is a God in Heaven, my boy, your father was innocent. But the evidence was against him. One man named Amos Skillings was induced to go upon the witness-stand and swear to your father's guilt. That ended the case and he was sentenced to fourteen years in Sing Sing prison. Oh God!"

The poor woman staggeringly arose, and with both hands pressed to her temples, crossed the room in a distracted way.

As for Charlie, he sprang up with deadly pale face and flashing

His hands were clenched and his voice husky as he cried
 Mother, I never knew this before! My father in prison? Why,
 is infamous. Accused wrongfully of forgery?"

"Yes, wrongfully accused."

"But you told me he was dead. Ah! I see—it was to spare me
 pain and wounded pride. Oh, mother, this is awful. But if my father
 is indeed in prison and held there upon a false charge, it shall be my
 life work to prove his innocence."

This was nobly spoken. It brought a flood of tears to Mrs. Cod-
 man's eyes. She gazed upon her son with love and admiration. Then
 she lowered her voice and said in a hushed way:

"Your noble resolution, Charlie, can never be carried out."

"It must—I will raise Heaven and earth."

"It cannot be done, I say."

"Why?"

"Your father is truly dead."

Charlie Codman drew a deep, gasping breath. His boyish form
 swayed with a mighty emotion.

"Then he died in that prison?"

"Yes. I did not know of it until after his body had been placed to
 rest in the graveyard upon the hill where murderers and robbers sleep
 their last sleep. I could not reclaim his body."

"It is terrible!" exclaimed the boy. He assisted his mother
 back to her seat. Then he cast himself at her feet and held a long
 conversation with her upon the past.

We will not give it, but suffice to say that Charlie offered his mother
 words of comfort, and drew a glowing picture of what great deeds he
 would accomplish in the future. In common with bright youth he
 recognized no adversity, would tolerate no thought of defeat.

"I am going immediately to apply for this position," he declared.
 "To be sure it is not a very great one, but, nevertheless, it is a be-
 ginning, and if I work hard perhaps I may win promotion."

"Very well, my son," said Mrs. Codman, who could not help but
 be pleased with her son's enterprise. "Perhaps it is for the best.
 May good fortune go with you!"

"It will!" cried Charlie, enthusiastically. "I shall get the posi-
 tion."

Mrs. Codman took up the paper and glanced at it. A quick
 change of feature succeeded, and she exclaimed:

"Why, Charlie Codman, this man was your father's lawyer, Sidney
 Anderson. He defended your father in the trial against him for the
 forgery."

Charlie was greatly surprised. Then his face brightened.

"Is that so? Why then, mother, if he is an old friend of my father's,
 he might be very willing to help me on that score."

There was a strange light in Mrs. Codman's eyes. She shook her
 head slowly.

"It may be so," she said.

But she did not impart to Charlie what was upon her mind. She
 recalled her girlhood days when in the lovely New Jersey town Sidney
 Anderson and Moses Codman were rival suitors for her hand. She
 had given her heart to the latter, though the former had fiercely pro-
 tested his love.

This affection had not seemed to die out, for seven years later when
 she was made a widow by the death of her husband in Sing Sing, in
 spite of her disgrace and penury, Sidney Anderson came to her again
 with his love, and offered her his hand.

But her heart was too heavy and her fealty to her dead husband's
 memory too strong. In vain Anderson plead his suit.

She had not seen him for nine years, and in this time her child had
 grown up to the fine lad of sixteen, and now was about to seek em-
 ployment in the office of the man whom she had thrice rejected and
 who yet remained single.

There was just a tinge of romance in these circumstances. At first
 Mrs. Codman had thought of restraining Charlie from seeking the po-
 sition. Then a thought of the disappointment and the apparent folly
 of such a move restrained her.

So when Charlie appeared a moment later ready to go in quest of
 the position, she kissed him with a strange something tugging at her
 heart strings and said no word of remonstrance.

A few moments later Charlie Codman was rapidly making his way
 down-town to seek the office of Lawyer Anderson.

It was with some few misgivings that Charlie climbed up the stairs

and entered the office of the lawyer. He saw a man sitting at a desk
 with papers piled upon it. He was a man of spare features and thin
 form, and a sharp almost sinister gleam in his eyes.

The walls of the room were ornamented with well-filled book-cases.
 In fact the general appearance of the office was in all respects similar
 to that of the average lawyer's den.

There chanced to be nobody else in the office with Lawyer Ander-
 son as Charlie entered. A client had just left and the man of law was
 engaged in assorting his papers.

He gave a start and looked up as Charlie entered and stood before
 him. He surveyed the boy with a shrewd, critical eye. There was a
 coldness in it which Charlie did not like.

"Well, my boy," he asked in a steel-like voice, "what is it?"

"If you please, sir," said Charlie. "I saw your advertisement in
 the paper for an errand boy and I have come to answer it."

"Ah, you have, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"You would like the position?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what have you to recommend you? Have you ever worked
 in a lawyer's office before?"

"No, sir."

"Then you have no experience?"

"No, sir, but I am willing to learn," said Charlie, eagerly. "I will
 work hard."

"That is enough. I want a capable boy. You are not experienc-
 ed. I do not want you."

With sinking heart Charlie turned to the door. What motive
 prompted Lawyer Anderson to recall him it would be difficult to say.

"One moment. What is your name?" he asked.

"My name is Charlie Codman."

The lawyer sprung up from his seat with a quick, sharp, gasping
 cry.

CHAPTER II.

CHARLIE BECOMES ERRAND BOY.

THIS action upon the part of the man of law astonished Charlie not
 a little. For an instant he gazed into Mr. Anderson's cold gray eyes
 in sheer surprise and doubt.

It was fully half a minute before the lawyer recovered himself.

"Pardon me, my boy," he said. "But that name was very familiar
 to me. Come nearer so that I can look into your face."

Charlie obeyed of course. The lawyer gave an earnest and deep
 glance into his countenance.

"The same features," he exclaimed, in a strange thrilled voice.

"My boy, who was your father?"

"His name was Moses Codman."

"The same," cried the lawyer, trembling like a leaf. "Look here,
 my boy. Where do you live? Where is your mother?"

"I live at No. — East Twentieth street, and my mother is at home,"
 replied Charlie.

"Yes, yes. Is she quite well?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did—did she send you here?"

"I came with her consent, sir. I am just out of school and want
 to go to work."

"Ah, indeed!" remarked the lawyer, with a thoughtful look in his
 calculating eyes. "Well, you are a straightforward boy, Charlie.
 Your mother knew that you were coming here. Did she mention the
 fact that she knew me?"

"Yes, sir," replied Charlie.

"Ah, what did she say?" asked the lawyer, with strange eagerness.

Charlie was at a loss to understand this singular action of Lawyer
 Anderson. Why should he ask such searching questions? It might
 be a peculiarity of a lawyer, he thought. In any event it could do no
 harm to tell the truth.

"Yes, sir," he replied; "she said that she knew you, and that you
 were father's lawyer before—before he died. That was all."

"Yes—yes," said Lawyer Anderson, in an abstract way, and then
 as though in deep reverie upon the past, "What if time had brought
 it all about and broken down that bar. Ah, she is her old self, I will
 warrant, although we have both acquired a few gray hairs."

He turned in his chair and said:

"Charlie, you may take off your coat and go to work. I shall give you a salary of four dollars per week for the present. By and by, if you do well, I will raise it."

Overwhelmed with joy, Charlie obeyed the command. Four dollars per week! It seemed to him like a bonanza! He would earn it—every cent of it.

Off came his coat, and by Mr. Anderson's directions, he swept the office and dusted the furniture. Then he ran to the post office, for letters to a broker's office for some bonds, and even to the court house with a bundle of evidence.

"I have always needed an errand boy," said Mr. Anderson. "You seem to be very quick and apt, Charlie. To-morrow I shall want you to go to court with me. If you do well, I will help you. How would you like to be a lawyer?"

"Very much indeed!" replied the boy, cheerfully. "You are very kind, Mr. Anderson. I would be glad of the opportunity to study law."

"Well, we will try you at the occupation of errand boy for this year," said Mr. Anderson. "After that, if you do well, you shall certainly be permitted to take up the study of law. I knew your father well. And here, my boy, is a note from me to your mother."

Charlie Codman went home that night, the happiest boy in New York. In his hand he carried the letter and gave it to his mother.

"It's a fine job," cried Charlie, enthusiastically. "And Mr. Anderson is such a nice man. Only think, mother, I am to get four dollars per week. Almost half as much as you make with your millinery."

"Oh, it is very kind of Mr. Anderson," said Mrs. Codman in a choking voice. "I hope you will faithfully perform your work, my boy."

"I will try to," declared Charlie, earnestly.

Then Mrs. Codman opened the letter sent her by Mr. Anderson and read it with emotions of indescribable sort. There were traces of tears on her lovely cheeks when she had finished.

Thus the letter read:

"MY DEAR FRIEND:

"A kind fate has again, after nine years, apprised me of your whereabouts. I was indeed surprised when your boy came into my office to-day. When last I saw you your heart was harrowed with the desolating sorrow of a fearful bereavement. Please do not understand by this letter that I mean to urge my suit again with any thought of rudeness. But my heart goes out to you in your straitened circumstances. I know that my regard for you has not in the past been reciprocated, but now that years have spanned the flood betwixt you and your sorrow, are its traces sufficiently obliterated to permit you to think at least kindly of me. This I must claim to be, though you should forbid a closer relation,

"Your true Friend,

"SIDNEY ANDERSON."

As soon as she had recovered from the effects of this letter, Mrs. Codman seated herself at the table and wrote a reply.

"MY DEAR SIR:

"I hardly know how to reply to you, for the fact that the motive of your letter was to me a trifle ambiguous. You speak of your suit of former years and also of your friendship. The latter I accept and shall cherish. Years have truly passed, but a century could never fully obliterate the deadly grief of my bereavement, and, until death, I must hold sacred the memory of the only man I ever loved, and who was my chosen husband. Trusting that you will consider me in the same light as of nine years ago, I thank you for your kindness to my boy, and beg you to consider me always as

"Your true friend,

"ALICE CODMAN."

Charlie carried this back to Lawyer Anderson the next day. The result was a second letter in this wise:

"DEAR FRIEND:

"I have vainly tried to suppress my feelings in a matter which I fear is still as repugnant to you as ever. I can understand from the tone of your letter that a second marriage is a subject of much distaste to you. Yet I am so hungry for one slight morsel even of hope, that I am impelled, at the risk of offending you, to write this request which it is easy for you to grant, and would be a cup of nectar to me. Were you to marry, would you accept me from the world's herd of men with as much readiness as any other man of your acquaintance?

I thirst for the happy knowledge that I stand as high in your estimation as any other man living to-day.

"Your friend ever,

"SIDNEY ANDERSON."

Mrs. Codman's reply was brief, and at once terminated the correspondence.

"DEAR SIR: I will cheerfully grant your request. Were I to seriously entertain the impossible idea of a second marriage I should consider your offer certainly with as much favor as that of any man living to-day.

Yours very truly,

"ALICE CODMAN."

"Ah!" exclaimed the lawyer when he read this note. "There was a time when she scorned my slightest advance. These nine years have modified it to an equality with other men. I am certainly on the highway to success. A few more years and she will condescend to accept me. And I shall have won. I will have the prize for which I have struggled all these years. Success rewards those that wait, and I have waited long. But my patience is good, my love unquenchable, and, though it be in latter life, I will yet claim the woman who is mistress of my heart."

This explains to the reader in a degree the feeling and state of affairs between Lawyer Anderson and Mrs. Codman. Having made this clear, let us now go on with the story of Charlie's struggles and success.

The boy was an apt scholar and became almost an indispensable employee of the lawyer. Mr. Anderson placed full trust in him, and in no instance did Charlie abuse it.

Thus the first year passed during which he was errand boy.

In accordance with his promise Mr. Anderson promoted him to the position of copyist and student. Thus Charlie entered upon his studies for the legal profession.

He was the sort of boy that never does things by halves. It was impossible for him to plunge into a thing otherwise than all over. Therefore he threw his whole indefatigable energies into his duties and his studies.

His progress was something phenomenal. He advanced so rapidly that at the end of his second year Mr. Anderson had thought of giving him his brief, when, there came a sudden series of most thrilling events, which proved potent factors in the shaping of Charlie Codman's future.

Thus far he had been led to regard Mr. Anderson as his best and truest friend. A man of deep thought and unimpeachable character. The veil was suddenly and unceremoniously lifted.

One day Mr. Anderson went to court to fight a case of criminal character. A well-to-do country merchant named Hodgkins had been basely swindled by a reputed New Mexico miner, named Blivens.

It seemed that Blivens had obtained a mortgage upon the old man's farm and two thousand dollars in money, in return for a reputed gold brick, which, however, turned out to be the purest of brass.

It was an old trick, but Hodgkins had been caught napping.

Blivens was arrested and brought before the grand jury. To everybody's surprise he determined to fight it, and employed a sharp lawyer to aid him.

Mr. Anderson was counsel for the prosecution, or Mr. Hodgkins, and from the very earliest stages in the game it could be seen that the case bid fair to be an interesting one.

Thus far, Mr. Anderson had not seen the man Blivens. He, however, prepared his case from the evidence given him by Hodgkins, and went down to the court prepared to commit Blivens to a two years' sentence at least.

Charlie accompanied him, and as they entered the court-room Mr. Curtis, with his client Blivens, entered from the other side.

Blivens kept his face averted constantly and sat in a dark corner of the room. The trial was opened, and the examination of the witnesses was begun.

Charlie assisted Mr. Anderson, jotting down the evidence for cross-examination. The witnesses were examined one after another, until it came Blivens' turn. He walked to the stand almost sullenly, and standing against the railing gazed fairly into Mr. Anderson's face.

The result was most startling.

The lawyer stared back, and glared at the gold brick operator with ashen-hued visage. Then he began to tremble violently and sank into

a chair. The court-room was thrown into the wildest state of excitement.

In deference to Mr. Anderson the trial was set over for another week, and the apparently ill lawyer was driven home in his carriage.

That night, in some mysterious way, Blivens was bailed out. It was two days later when, to Charlie's unmitigated astonishment, he came into the office and demanded an interview with Mr. Anderson.

He was a low-browed villainous looking fellow, and Charlie shivered with disgust as he obeyed Mr. Anderson's command and ushered him into an inner office. Then the lawyer was closeted with him.

When he finally emerged, Charlie could see that Mr. Anderson was very pale and agitated. At the door Blivens' last words were:

"I've got to be got out of the scrape somehow, understand that? Oh, I'm a troublesome chap, I am. I don't want to jump the bail, but I'll do it, rather than go up for two years."

Mr. Anderson muttered something under his breath, and when he turned back into the office he was corpse like. All this troubled Charlie.

"What does it mean?" he reflected. "Why would Mr. Anderson tolerate this man in his office? He acts afraid of him. It begins to look to me as if the fellow had some sort of a black mail grip on Mr. Anderson."

This was the first shadow of a suspicion to cross Charlie's mind as to the good character and strict honor of his employer. Ah, beneath the surface was that of which he little dreamed, and really of most dreadful sort.

CHAPTER III.

CHARLIE IS ACCORDED A STUNNING REVELATION.

THE case never came to trial. In some way Mr. Hodgkins received his money back and was induced not to prosecute, the case fell flat in consequence. Mr. Anderson seemed to manifest little interest in it, and Mr. Blivens, the rascal, went scot free.

This was a proceeding which did not please or satisfy Charlie's ideas of justice. From that hour he began to regard Lawyer Anderson in a new and less favorable light.

He did not impart his convictions to his mother, not caring to do so. He understood something of the relations between her and the lawyer, and the mother had cost him not a little troublous thought.

At times he was inclined to believe that Mr. Anderson kept him in his employ, not wholly from choice, but with a motive in view. What this motive might be formed a deep and intangible mystery to him.

"It is queer," he reflected. "Somehow I cannot rid myself of the conviction that Lawyer Anderson is not truly our friend. There is some understanding between he and mother which I cannot fathom. I feel sure it concerns the past. I must know it, for I think if I did know it, I could right the wrongs of our family."

This impelled him to seek his mother and beg the truth. But Mrs. Codman professed surprise and replied:

"You know all, Charlie. There is nothing more. Why do you entertain such a foolish idea?"

"It may seem foolish to you," persisted Charlie, obstinately. "But I tell you, mother, I know Lawyer Anderson has some end in view. I would like to know what it is?"

A strange pang shot through Mrs. Codman's breast. An idea occurred to her which she did not care to express to Charlie. A suspicion of the truth was uppermost in her mind.

To be sure, Lawyer Anderson's offer would seem like a most flattering one to a poor widow, dependent upon her needle for support. There was certainly the offer of a fine home and wealth.

At times it seemed to her a duty she owed her boy to accept, and then her heart would sicken as a memory of her husband's face came to her.

"No," she would say, resolutely. "I must hold him in memory ever dear. It would be sacrilege to now give my life to another whom I do not nor cannot love."

With this view, she steeled her heart against it. Had Lawyer Anderson been otherwise than an indefatigable and patient suitor, he must long since have abandoned the effort.

But to the contrary, as time went on, he grew firmer in his purpose, and stronger in his belief of ultimate success. It was strange, this eccentricity of his, for there were many women whom he could have married, and fully as beautiful as Mrs. Codman. Yet his purpose was unswerving.

Charlie had been two years in Mr. Anderson's office when the Blivens case came up. It seemed to mark a new train of incidents.

One year as errand boy, and now, at seventeen, he was copyist and student. A few years of such persistent work would enable him to gain admittance to the bar. That prospective honor was the boy's golden dream.

Already he pictured himself conducting some great civil case before the grand jury. He had made a study of many technicalities which he had seen successfully employed by distinguished lawyers, and had, in fact, laid down the fundamental principles of a great career.

But, unfortunately, the vicissitudes of this life are such that matters cannot always run in the grooves so evenly prepared for them, and sooner or later the inevitable crash of misfortune must come. The life of no individual, however well planned or skillfully conducted, is free from these dark days of trouble and reverse.

Thus far Charlie had enjoyed the confidence of his employer and had made a good return. But this could not always last.

Since the trial of Blivens, Mr. Anderson had acted very unnaturally. His manner toward Charlie seemed changed, and in place of his former kind ways and interest, he now became irritable and overbearing. His real nature cropped out and our hero was enabled to see him in a true light.

With this state of affairs, Charlie began to look for his discharge. But though he used him shabbily, the lawyer had not as yet gone so far as this.

One day Charlie was sent with a package of papers to an office in Wall street. As he was going down that noted thoroughfare, he was given a start of surprise to see Blivens coming out of a buffet.

The gold brick operator was dressed in a loud plaid suit, wore patent leather shoes, shining silk hat and carried a cane. Evidently the world had been using him well of late, for when he had appeared at the trial he was a good specimen of shabby genteel.

Charlie certainly would not have addressed him, but at that instant Blivens chanced to see him.

In a moment the sharper had beckoned to him. Charlie, however, did not respond, but kept on down the street. Seeing this, with characteristic persistence, Mr. Blivens crossed over and confronted him.

Charlie stowed the papers away in his pocket and regarded the sharper suspiciously.

"Well, my boy!" exclaimed Mr. Blivens, in a patronizing way, "you aren't disposed to be very civil, are ye? Ah, you needn't be afraid. I don't want to rob ye. I am a gentleman, I am. Don't I look like it? Ha-ha-ha! That makes you smile. Look here, it's a pretty steady job you've got with Shark Anderson, ain't it?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Charlie, with dignity. "But I don't think Mr. Anderson would relish being called a shark. It hardly seems commendable in you after his kindness to you."

Blivens tipped his head back and laughed.

"Kindness," he cried. "Well, that's good. Oh, yes, the shark is my best friend. He's a good friend when he has to be, you know."

The swift suspicion which had crossed Charlie's mind seemed confirmed by these words.

"I know nothing wrong about Mr. Anderson," he said, guardedly.

"Oh, in course not. Anderson is all right," said Blivens, changing his manner. "So you are Moses Codman's boy, eh? Well, you look like your father. It's a queer world, but I never dreamed of seeing Moses Codman's son working for Shark Anderson. No offense. We used to call him the shark ten years ago, because he was such a grabber of the spoils. That's all. Where are ye going, boy?"

"Mr. Anderson might not wish me to tell," replied Charlie, whose mind was rapidly working with the implied revelations of Blivens' talk.

"By jinks, you are really an honest boy," declared Blivens in something like surprise. "Taint often we see one nowadays. Well, Moses was an honest man too, until--until--"

In an instant Charlie's whole being was aroused. He placed a hand upon Blivens' arm.

"You knew my father?" he asked eagerly.

"I did, my boy," replied the sharper.

"Ah, then you can tell me about him. He was falsely imprisoned. he was not guilty of that awful charge of forgery. Did people not judge him harshly?"

A strange expression flitted across Blivens' face.

"Come up here," he said, drawing Charlie into the shadow of a building.

"Look here, my boy," he continued. "I like you, drat me if I don't. It is so mighty seldom that ye come across an honest heart in this scheming world that I'm always glad to talk with one. I ain't honest myself. I never could make it pay. The honest men always get sucked in, and when I see one going that way I like to save him. Yes, I knew your father, and he was the honestest man in New York. He was wronged, and the man who was his best friend wronged him. He never knew it though. Poor Moses! I could have saved him, but the money was on the other horse you see. I had to win."

"What?" exclaimed Charlie, with horror. "Do you mean to say that you profited by my father's downfall?"

"Well, that's about the size of it."

"You are a scoundrel then."

"Ye-es, thank you. I know it. I don't deny it. But you'll find a good many like me in the world, only they may be higher-toned, like Shark Anderson, for instance."

"My God!" cried Charlie, with bursting brain. "Do you—dare you intimate that Lawyer Anderson was implicated in my father's ruin?"

"Hold on, don't go so fast," said Blivens, deprecatingly. "I didn't commit myself. Oh, no. But when you've lived a little longer in the world you'll know a little more, that's all. Shark is keeping you in his office at a good salary, ain't he?"

"Yes," admitted Charlie.

"Hem! he writes nice little notes to your mother, don't he?"

Charlie gave a start of surprise.

"How did you know that?" he asked.

"Oh, I guessed that," was the sharper's nonchalant response. "I am on to the Shark's little peculiarities. He was in love with your mother before she married Moses Codman. I know all about your genealogy, you bet. P'raps you can guess what the Shark's nice little game is?"

"That is ridiculous!" exclaimed Charlie. "Mr. Anderson is too old a man now to think of marrying, let alone playing such a game as you mention to induce my mother to marry him. I will not believe it."

Blivens' face clouded.

"All right, my boy, but you don't know the shark. He is a still hunter, and never gives up his grip. If it takes a lifetime to gain an end, he'll gain it, you bet."

"Will you please explain your motives in apprising me of all this?" asked Charlie, bluntly.

"Well, to tell the truth, I always liked Moses Codman. He was a good man. Ever since I saw you in the court room, I've sorter felt an interest in ye. I know the undercurrent and you don't. Jack Blivens never believed in friendship, but he'd like to place jest one good thing to his credit account in this life. I know who wronged your father, and I won't call no names. But I'll tell you right here in good faith, this man Anderson is a shark, and he allus was one. You can see that he's afraid of me. I have a secret of his. Ha! ha! ha! I've got the shark between my thumb and finger. Do you see how nice I dress? Well, that comes of my little game of diplomacy."

Charlie's eyes were opened at last. He believed what Blivens had told him. His suspicions regarding Lawyer Anderson were confirmed. It was a revelation to him of most wonderful sort. Impulsively he said:

"Jack Blivens, I thank you. It is a timely warning that you have given me. But I must ask a great favor of you."

"Eh, what is it?" asked the sharper.

"Who is responsible for my father's ruin?"

Jack Blivens shifted his position uneasily. He looked about him nervously to make sure that nobody was looking or in hearing. Then he lowered his voice and said, eagerly:

"Charlie Codman, it is a good time for you and I to have an understanding. You know who and what I am. I have been to the lowest depths of crime. There ain't a more desperate villain in America than I have been. I'm getting old. I'm going to quit it. I've got a wife up here in the northern part of the State, and she is a good woman, and has always been true to me. She'll take me back, an' I'm going there to spend the rest of my days. Your father once did me a favor. I went back on him I know, but it ain't too late to make up for it even now. I am going to be your friend. I am going

to work for you and help you overthrow the enemy. Will you believe that I am your friend?"

"Yes," replied Charlie, readily.

"Good! now I'm going to lay the facts down to you, just as they are. Your father was duped by a false friend. Shall I tell you who that man was? As I live this moment it was the man you are working for now, Lawyer Anderson."

Charlie turned deadly pale.

"My God!" he cried. "And I have thought him our best friend."

"That is just what your father thought. But he proved false. That is the shark's little game, you know. He is a good friend, until the time comes when you are asleep and he can put the knife to your throat. Then he is the most cold-blooded one you ever saw. Oh, I know him."

"I shall leave his employ at once," declared Charlie, with ringing brain.

"No."

"Why not?"

"For the best of reasons. I will tell you what they are."

Blivens cleared his throat.

"Your father was convicted of the forgery of a bond. Now the signatures upon that bond were truly forgeries, and his own name was a forgery. His hand never touched the pen that wrote those names; who the forger was remains to be seen. The execution of that bond was attempted by his own lawyer, Mr. Anderson. Of course your father disclaimed the bond, and this led to an investigation. The result was the discovery that it was a forgery."

"But in spite of the fact that your father had previously disclaimed the bond he was convicted, his counsel making a lame defense, and it being shown that he had attempted evasion by disclaiming the bond. It was the rankest act of injustice ever perpetrated, and the man responsible for it all was Anderson."

"Oh, God!" groaned Charlie. "Then he is the man upon whom I must avenge my father's wrongs; It is terrible. But I will have him arrested this hour. Though my father is dead, his name shall be vindicated."

"No," exclaimed Blivens. "That won't do. I forbid it."

"Why?"

"It would overturn us."

"But you can testify that the bond was forged by Anderson?"

"Not until that bond is produced. It is too early in the game yet to make such decisive action. We must proceed carefully, for Anderson is a sharp man. We can defeat him, but we must wait our time."

"How can we get hold of the bond?" asked Charlie.

"Ah, that I do not know. It may not even be in existence. But if it is, it no doubt is among his private papers somewhere. This is why I would advise you to remain in his employ. Search his office for it at first opportunity. If you find it our case is ready for the court. We can beat him."

Charlie had studied law sufficiently to know that Blivens was right. With no evidence one has no case. The bond was primary evidence.

"I will follow your advice," he said, simply.

"That is right, my boy," cried Blivens, enthusiastically. "We will down the fox yet, and after all these years of suffering Moses Codman shall again face the world with an unsullied name, and I shall have paid my debt of gratitude to him."

"What—what do you mean?" gasped Charlie Codman, with fearful excitement. "You say that my father will again face the world with an unsullied name? Can he rise from the grave to do this? What! My God! You do not mean——"

Blivens leaned forward and gazed deep into the boy's eyes, saying with fearful intensity:

"I mean every word of it, my boy. Your father never died in Sing Sing. It was all a hoax and he is living to day, and if I can bring it about shall be restored to you."

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLIE SECURES AN ALLY.

THE world seemed to reel about Charlie Codman for a few moments. He would have fallen but for Blivens' strong arm. There was a ringing of bells in his ears, succeeded by the sweetest of music, and he

awoke from his brief faint with the most delicious sense of happiness.

"My father alive!"

The exclamation dropped rapturously from his lips, and he seemed to give way to the spell of indescribable joy upon him. Finally he recovered himself to say eagerly:

"My dear, kind friend, you will take me to him?"

But Blivens shook his head.

"Not yet," he said firmly. "It is impossible just now."

"When can I see him?"

"When Anderson is defeated."

"Oh, what will mother say! What a happy realization this is. Oh, Mr. Blivens, we shall always regard you as our greatest benefactor."

But Blivens put up his hand.

"Under no circumstances must you tell your mother," he said.

Charlie was bitterly disappointed.

"Why?" he asked.

"For many good reasons, which I cannot explain just now."

"You say he is safe and well?"

"Yes."

A dark shadow drifted across the boy's face.

"Why, in all these years, has he kept away from us?" he asked.

"His heart must have yearned for his family."

"It has," declared Blivens. "I cannot tell you all now. You must be patient."

"Nor will I ask it," said Charlie. "It is enough to know that my father is alive. Oh, Heaven be praised! But why should this report of his death at Sing Sing have got about?"

"I will tell you that story. With your father at Sing Sing was a convict named Arnold, who had been ten years in the place, and had but two more to serve. But he was despondent and one day confided in your father the truth that he had swallowed a dose of arsenic, smuggled into the prison for him, and must die. At the moment they were in the corridor, and your father had just time to carry Arnold into his cell, which chanced to be the nearest, and place him upon a cot.

"No use to send for a physician. The poison had worked, and he was dead. Your father was horror stricken, and had started to notify the prison officers, when a thought occurred to him.

"His number was 340 and Arnold's was 349. There was a striking resemblance between them. It did not take your father long to change clothes with the dead man, and assume the character and short sentence of Arnold. The body was found in Codman's cell, in Codman's clothes, and number 340 on them. Accordingly he was buried as Moses Codman.

"It chanced the next week that a pardon came from the Governor, freeing Arnold from the two years left of his sentence. Thus your father was set free. He came to New York and confronted Anderson. I cannot tell you the result nor where he is now. I can only say that he is alive and shall be restored to you when lawyer Anderson is convicted. Does this satisfy you?"

"It does," replied Charlie, impulsively. "Mr. Blivens, you have my undying gratitude. Heaven will bless you for all this. But now you must tell me how to act, for I am anxious to reclaim my father."

"There is one very important thing," said Blivens, shrewdly. "Keep in with Anderson. At the first opportunity search for that bond. Be sure and find it. It means victory."

"I will do it."

"Now I will leave you. I need not advise you to be shrewd. Remember I am your friend. It is all on account of a kindness Moses Codman did me once, for generally I'm more inclined to cussedness than anything good. But I am going to down Shark Anderson. Whenever you want to see me come to this restaurant and leave a note with the clerk for Jim Blivens. Good-bye."

The crook was gone. For some seconds Charlie stood in a spell. Then he came to his senses and remembered his errand. He had spent an hour in conversation with Blivens.

It seemed to him as though he were in a dream as he sped on his errand and started back to Lawyer Anderson's office.

When he arrived there the lawyer reproved him for his delay. Charlie took the lecture meekly, though, when Anderson's back was turned and he gazed upon him with the thought that he was the man who had so foully wronged his father, he was tempted to wreak vengeance upon him.

For the remainder of that day Charlie was in a trance. But the next day he came out of it, and realized how necessary it was that he should carry out the instructions of Blivens.

"Wonder where father is?" he mused. "It must be that he is in hiding somewhere, and is afraid to show himself, lest he might be sent back to Sing Sing to serve out the rest of his sentence. Oh, I wish I knew where he was, and I wish I could tell mother."

But Charlie Codman was a sensible boy, and banished these longings from his mind.

He realized that Blivens was right, and the proper way was first to obtain the necessary evidence against Anderson.

He resolved to, at the first opportunity, search for the bond.

But in the meanwhile other matters came up, and events of a thrilling sort claimed his attention.

That Blivens had told him the truth regarding Mr. Anderson, and that he was really the fox which he had represented him, he was destined to learn in a most startling manner.

One day Charlie was left alone in the office. Ensconced in an easy chair in one corner of the room, he was engaged in reading Blackstone. So deeply buried was he in his study that he did not heed the entrance of two men until he heard the voice of Mr. Anderson.

"Now, Benson, we are all alone. Shut and bolt that door. We can talk the matter over here quietly."

Charlie was actuated by an impulse to leap up and announce his presence, but an unaccountable motive prevented him. He lay quietly back in the depths of the chair and overheard a conversation that chilled his blood.

He knew the man called Benson to be the lawyer's valet, a disagreeable, surly fellow, who occasionally came to the office.

"Take that chair, Benson," said the lawyer, as he sat down at his desk. "Now we will proceed to business at once."

"Yes, sir," replied the valet, cringingly.

"You, of course, remember the little job which you and Amos Skillings did for me some years ago?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"You remember I paid Skillings well."

"I do, sir."

"Well, with characteristic ingratitude, he has come back to this country and foisted upon me a blackmailing scheme."

"The dirty rascal."

"Exactly. He robbed a man named Hodgkins a short while ago, and I had to pay the man's claim and get the scamp out of the scrape. I would rather have sent him up to Blackwell's Island."

"Of course, sir."

"He is masquerading here under the name of Jim Blivens."

"Oh, indeed."

"Now look here, Benson, you have never failed me. I have got a deep job for you. There is risk in it, but I'll pay you well for it. Listen. While Jim Blivens, or Skillings, is alive and at large, I can never hope to be safe. Do you understand me?"

There was a moment of ominous silence. Charlie felt his blood grow cold.

"Heavens!" he thought. "What if I should be caught here. He would kill me."

So he crouched lower in the chair and kept perfectly still. The reply came from Benson in a hard voice:

"I understand ye, sir. I will take care of Jim Blivens for ye."

"Then you will do the job?"

"I will."

"Make it sure."

"Depend upon that."

"You shall be paid five thousand dollars."

"Thank ye, sir. That is generous."

"Now do you know where to find him?"

"No, sir."

"He hangs around the restaurant in Wall street. Watch for him there, and make friends with him on the score of former acquaintance. You can manage the rest."

The door was opened and Benson passed out of the office. Anderson returned to his desk chuckling fiendishly. He took up his pen and began to write. Charlie dared not move. It seemed ages to him before Anderson went out closing the spring latch to the door, locking it to entrance from the outside.

Not until his footsteps had died out on the stairs did Charlie dare to move. Then he sprang up wildly:

"Oh, that is awful," he gasped. "I never would have believed that of Lawyer Anderson. A murder planned in this office. Oh, what a cold-blooded monster he is. But it shall never be perpetrated. I can and will prevent it. I must see Blivens at once and warn him."

He started for the door with this purpose uppermost in his mind. But a sudden thrilling thought restrained him and he turned back into the inner office?

CHAPTER V.

CHARLIE AVERTS A CATASTROPHE.

THE motive which impelled Charlie to turn back into the office was engendered by a sudden thought of the forged bond.

What better opportunity could he have to make search for it?

The lawyer was gone, the door locked, and there could be no suspicion that he was the guilty one to ransack the desk. He determined upon the bold move in full accordance with Blivens' shrewd directions.

Moreover, now that the plot was thickening it was not difficult to see that at any moment an exigency might arise in which the producing of the bond would be necessary to insure triumph.

Taking the precaution to make sure that Anderson was not returning, Charlie began the search.

He commenced with one desk drawer and went carefully through it, examining every paper and putting it back in its place.

Several papers bearing his father's name were found, but none bearing the stamp of a bond. One drawer after another was ransacked in turn, but the bond was not to be found.

This was a keen disappointment for Charlie. He had faithfully believed that he would find the necessary paper in the lawyer's desk. Where else should he look for it?

The safe was closed, and he had not the combination for opening it.

The paper might be in it. If so then he must abandon hopes of finding it for the present.

Every corner, nook and shelf in the office was assiduously explored by the excited lad. The important bond was not in the office. Of this he became satisfied.

His chagrin was excessive.

Where now should he look for the bond? Upon second thought it occurred to him that the lawyer had no doubt destroyed it years ago. He could imagine no possible reason for keeping it. If so, then his cause was lost.

He sat down in a chair for a moment, and felt like crying with bitter disappointment. But his manly nature asserted itself, and he sprang up, crying:

"In some way that bond will turn up all right. I know it—I feel it! I will keep up good courage. But I must find Jim Blivens at once. If anything happens to him then all is lost!"

With this resolution uppermost in his mind Charlie went out in quest of Blivens. He went to the restaurant in Wall street. But he had not been seen there for some days, and disappointed again Charlie was obliged to be satisfied with leaving a note for his man.

He hung about the vicinity, though, as long as he dared. One fact consoled him. He did not see anything of Benson, and did not believe that he had as yet embarked upon his murderous enterprise.

"There is a chance yet," he reflected. "Benson cannot in all likelihood get in his work so quickly as all that. I will yet save the day."

The day was now coming to a close, and he turned his weary footsteps homeward. It was a long ways to East Twentieth street, but Charlie finally arrived at the door. He climbed up the long stairs to their humble room in the top story of the tenement.

But just as he was about to put his hand upon the latch he heard a masculine voice within, and experienced a thrill. It was the voice of Lawyer Anderson.

"What does he want here?"

This was the thought which flashed swiftly through Charlie's mind. He did not open the door, for the words coming to his hearing petrified him.

"You must be assured of my earnest love for you, Alice. You rejected me in preference of Moses Codman. I was heart-broken, but bore up bravely. I have never shown you spite nor hardness. In-

deed, I was your husband's staunchest friend in his trouble. Is not all this a sufficient test of my honor and fealty? Now I come to you after all these years and offer you a home, a future for your son, and for some unaccountable reason you will persist in coldly rejecting me. What whim, what coherent reason can you give for this?"

Charlie's blood boiled. It was with difficulty that he awaited his mother's reply.

"It may be that I am wrong," said his mother, in reply, and her voice trembled. "But there is something sacred in the memory of my husband, indeed, so sacred that it would seem to me profanity to take one in the place which he occupied in my heart."

"Pshaw! That is neither a practical nor womanly way to view the question. We have but one life to live. We should not hamper or obscure it with vain, useless regrets or mistaken ideas of fealty. The duty you owe your son demands that you give the advantages of travel and study. As my wife you can do this. You cannot deny this."

"You may be right, James Anderson. I, no doubt, do owe it to my son to bury the past, and sacrifice something for his future. I will consider your offer more seriously. But you will not urge an immediate answer."

"I have already waited with enduring patience. Oh, Alice, if you knew the strength of my love for you, you would not hesitate, but throw yourself into my arms."

"It—it seems all wrong to me."

"It is all right. Come, let us settle the question now. I knew I should win you. My treasure, my own!"

This was enough for Charlie. He threw open the door and rushed in, to find the lawyer holding his mother's hands passionately. Without any thought of consequences, Charlie cried with all the fervor of his being:

"Mother, do not promise him that. It can never, never be. You must not marry this man. You shall not!"

It would be difficult to depict the situation truthfully. Mrs. Codman recoiled, and the lawyer turned with an oath upon his lips. He glared at Charlie, and then recovering himself attempted a pleasant laugh.

"Well," he exclaimed, with an effort at pleasantry; "this is a very dramatic situation. It is evident, Charlie, that you do not intend that I shall take your mother from you."

Charlie's face was very pale, and his eyes shone like diamonds.

"Not by you, sir," he flashed.

He came near betraying all in the heat of that moment. Only a moment's swift reflection saved him from ruining the game by fiercely denouncing Lawyer Anderson as an impostor and would be murderer.

The shrewd lawyer regarded him with an affectation of mild surprise. His emotions would have been quite different had he known the truth that Charlie was possessed of his villainous plot against Jim Blivens, life.

Mrs. Codman was astonished by the words and manner of her son, but ascribed it to nothing more than his aversion to his mother's second marriage.

Therefore she spoke reprovingly.

"My son, I am surprised at the rudeness of this outburst. Is this fair usage of your friend and benefactor?"

Charlie faced his mother with tears in his eyes.

"Oh, mother," he exclaimed from the depths of his heart. "You cannot have forgotten father. Your love for him must be strong enough to enable you to hold his memory always sacred and give you strength to forego such a step as this."

"My love for your father is such that I could always make his memory my shrine," cried Mrs. Codman. "But you do not know all, my boy. A mother's duty must sometimes be fulfilled even at a sacrifice. It is for you, my son."

"No—no, I will never listen to it," cried Charlie eagerly. "This must never be. I tell you, mother, it cannot be."

Mrs. Codman turned to Lawyer Anderson.

"You understand the situation," she said. "I must ask you to leave me. I will give you my answer at another time."

Lawyer Anderson bowed low.

"Your wish is law," he said. "I shall live in hope, for I feel that your reply will be favorable and requite my undying love."

The door closed behind him and Charlie was alone with his mother. The boy drew a deep sigh.

"Oh, mother," he cried, drawing her to his breast. "There is an awful danger averted, a terrible pit covered up. If you had fallen into it, what sorrow would have been ours."

Mrs. Codman stood off and viewed her boy in astonishment.

"Why, Charlie," she exclaimed, "what can you mean? It is not possible that you have lost faith in the honor and friendship of Lawyer Anderson. See what he has done for us."

Charlie looked his mother squarely in the eye, and replied:

"Yes, but it was all for a purpose."

"What purpose?"

"Of gaining your hand in marriage."

"I cannot believe that. His efforts to help us have always seemed disinterested."

"They have always seemed so. But, oh, mother, if you only knew. You must wait a little while. I cannot tell you now, but I have learned some terrible things about Lawyer Anderson."

Mrs. Codman was seized with a sudden weakness, and nearly sank to the floor. Charlie assisted her to a chair.

"Charlie, my boy," she exclaimed huskily, "explain to me your meaning, or I shall go mad."

"I cannot do that now," replied Charlie determinedly. "You must wait, mother."

"Until when?"

"A few days—perhaps a week."

Mrs. Codman grasped her boy's wrist.

"Charlie, before God I adjure you, tell me this. Does what you have learned concern the bond for which your father was convicted?"

An impulse prompted the reply.

"Yes, mother, it does. Ask me no more."

Mrs. Codman sank back in her chair, pale and distraught, while tears trickled down from beneath her eye-lids.

"God, I thank Thee for this," she said, fervently. "I know that I have been spared from a fate worse than death. Now I can understand the feeling that has been so long upon me. Sometimes I knew, I felt, that it would all come out right. God be praised."

Charlie bowed his head reverently with this prayer. The subject was not mentioned again that evening, but a halo of light, of joy and of peace seemed to have formed about the little room. They talked happily of other subjects, and Charlie felt much relieved at the turn affairs had taken.

But the future yet held dark events. They were not yet out of the toils of the schemer, and thrilling incidents were to close the day.

Charlie went early to the office of Lawyer Anderson. It was probable that he would not have done this had it not been for his desire to keep on good terms with the lawyer until he should find the important bond.

To his surprise Benson was in the office, and though when Charlie entered he scowled at him with his usual fierceness, to the contrary Lawyer Anderson was exceedingly pleasant.

"Well, my boy," he said, cheerily, "you are ready for duty this morning."

"Yes, sir," replied Charlie.

"Good enough. Off with your coat first and sweep the office. After that I have an errand for you."

Charlie obeyed readily. He hung his coat upon a peg by the door. During his task he did not notice Benson go up to it and tuck a roll of bank-bills in the pocket.

When the floor was swept, Charlie put on his coat, and Lawyer Anderson gave him some letters to carry to the post office. Whistling merrily, Charlie descended to the street. He made his errand and had started back to the office, when he was electrified to meet Benson and a couple of policemen coming excitedly toward him.

"There's the young cub!" cried Benson, coarsely. "There's no doubt but he is the one took the money. If so, ye'll probably find it on him."

"All right, boss," said one of the officers, as they seized Charlie. Almost the first thing pulled out of his pocket was the roll of bills, as we have seen placed there by Benson. For the first time the nature of the scheme dawned upon Charlie.

CHAPTER VI.

BLIVENS PLAYS A TRUMP CARD.

WITH crushing force the truth was forced upon our brave little errand boy. It came so suddenly that for a moment he was dazed.

"He was the thief!" declared the officer, holding up the bills. "Here's your money."

"Whatever could prompt the little devil to do such a thing as that!" protested Benson, with an affectation of virtuous horror.

Charlie's face flushed angrily.

"It's a lie!" he cried. "I didn't steal the money."

"Indeed!" exclaimed one of the officers. "How did it come in your pocket, then?"

"I don't know. It was a dirty trick. Somebody placed it there."

Charlie glanced at Benson. But the officers were prejudiced.

"That's too thin!" they said conclusively. "You'd better come back to the office with us."

So back to the office they went, to find Mr. Anderson stern and affecting anger. It required but a glance at his face to warn Charlie that he need expect little mercy. He was the victim of a cleverly-played scheme.

It was the first time in his life that he had ever been accused of a theft. To be placed under arrest had always seemed to him a most terrible thing. Therefore, he was more humiliated than terrified as he was led into the office by the officers.

"We have got the thief, Mr. Anderson!" cried Benson, triumphantly. "It was jest as I told ye. The boy took the money. I tell ye blood will tell. His father was a forger before him, and the boy is following in his footsteps."

"Take back that statement, you cowardly cur, or I will thrash you!" cried Charlie, hotly, as he drew his athletic form up and confronted Benson with clenched fists.

"See that!" cried the ruffian. "He would assault me. I tell ye he's a hard ticket, an' it's a wonder ye've kept him in your employ so long, Mr. Anderson."

"You must restrain yourself, young man," said one of the officers, producing manacles, "or we shall be obliged to put these upon you."

Tears of wrath were in Charlie's eyes.

"This is an infamous outrage!" he cried. "I am not guilty of this charge. I never stole a thing in all my life."

"Silence!" said Mr. Anderson, sternly. "You, Benson, have too much to say. This is a matter for me to investigate. I can hardly believe my senses. Is it possible that you are guilty of theft, Charlie Codman? I am not only shocked; I am grieved."

"I deny the accusation," replied Charlie, grandly. "I did not take that money."

"You did not take it?" asked Anderson, affecting surprise.

"No, sir."

"That is odd. How came it in your pocket? Can you explain that?"

For a moment Charlie Codman was silent. Then he turned and fixed an accusing gaze upon Benson.

"It is all a mystery to me, sir. I never saw the money before, nor did I know that it was in my pocket. But I sincerely believe that that rascal yonder placed it there, with the intention of injuring me."

The officers and Anderson looked at Benson, who wore an admirably feigned expression of surprise and injured innocence.

"Why, gentlemen, I would have no motive for such an act," declared the villain. "It is preposterous and a clever subterfuge of the little rascal to get out of the scrape."

The officers exchanged glances with Mr. Anderson, who said, calmly:

"I have never known Benson to do a dishonest thing. I think he is right."

"Well sir," rejoined one of the officers, "this is no absolute proof that he did such a thing. On the other hand we know that the money was found in the boy's pocket. You have recovered your money. The case is good against him as you, being a lawyer, well know; do you care to prosecute?"

Anderson hesitated a moment.

"Charlie, it grieves me to become thus apprised of your dishonesty. I had trusted you as an own son. This will grieve your mother's heart sorely. I would like to intercede for you, but the law is inexorable and demands that an example be made of such a case. I am sorry but I cannot interfere."

Charlie grew sick at heart and broke down crying appealingly to the officers:

"Oh, I beg of you, do not send me to prison. It is too awful. It will break my mother's heart. I am not guilty."

"I am sorry, my boy," said one of the officers, tightening his grip on Charlie's arm. "But it is our duty to arrest you."

"Keep him until you hear from me," said Anderson, with a nod as he turned to his desk.

Down the stairs to the street in a state of the wildest terror Charlie was carried. When they had left the office Lawyer Anderson's manner changed. He sprung up and gripped Benson's hand with a demoniac laugh of triumph.

"Now!" he cried, and seizing his hat and coat, turned again to say: "Remain here until I return."

With this he left the office. Meanwhile Charlie was being dragged through the streets to the police station. It was to him a horrible experience.

People on the street stopped and gazed at the white faced boy. Sympathetic ones inquired the nature of his offense, but the majority scoffed and sneered at him.

In his excitement and the exaggeration of his distorted fancy, Charlie could see nothing but ruin and positive disgrace, sure to last forever in this arrest. His whole being was plunged into a state of pitiable distress.

But as they neared police headquarters Charlie's heart gave a leap at sight of a familiar face. A man emerged from the crowd and approached him with astonishment.

It was Blivens.

"What is this?" he cried. "What are you doing with that boy?"

Charlie's heart gave a leap. He felt that he had a friend in Blivens, and for a moment his courage revived. But the officers would vouchsafe no reply to Blivens, and Charlie was marched into the police station.

He was presented to the sergeant, and one of the officers said:

"It's a case of theft, sergeant."

"A boy," exclaimed the sergeant, regarding Charlie critically. "What did he take, Smith?"

The officer detailed the whole affair. The charge was perfectly clear, and after having all articles removed from his pockets, he was led through a corridor, and placed in a cell.

The door closed with a ringing snap, and a wave of horror broke over Charlie.

He was only cheered when he heard a familiar voice in the room beyond.

"I tell you I know the boy, Mr. Sergeant. He is an honest lad, and supports a widowed mother. I believe he is unjustly accused."

"The trial will demonstrate that," was the reply.

"It's a d-ratted shame to lock a boy up like that. Of course I can go in and see him."

"Yes, to the door. The cell cannot be opened, though."

The next moment footsteps came along the corridor, and Charlie came eagerly to the bars to grip hands through them with Jack Blivens. The ex-convict was profuse in his protestations of joy at meeting him, and wrath at his unjust imprisonment.

"I knew it was one of Shark Anderson's games," he said. "Now tell me all about it."

This Charlie proceeded to do. Blivens listened intently and then exclaimed:

"He's got the bulge on you, boy. I don't know but one way to get you out of the scrape. Maybe I can scare the Shark into letting go his grip."

"Oh, Mr. Blivens, you are so good."

"No—no, don't say that," objected the ex-convict. "I'm the devil and all. I've done worse things than this myself. But, hark ye, my boy, I don't intend to do any more."

"You are very kind to me at least."

"That's all right, boy. Yes, it's one of the Shark's nice little games. I'll try and fix him."

"Oh, you must not go yet," cried Charlie, earnestly, "I have got an awful warning for you. Your life is in terrible danger."

"My life!" ejaculated Blivens in surprise. "Well now that's funny. If it was the first time I might feel real bad. But as it ain't I am only curious, that is all. What's it about?"

Charlie hastened to detail the conversation he had heard between

Lawyer Anderson and Benson in the office, and the latter's contract to put him (Blivens) out of the way. The story brought a cloud over Blivens' face.

"Ah, ha!" he ejaculated, "so they are going to try that little thing on me, eh? Well, I'll be ready to go them higher, thanks to you, my boy. Ah, Jim Benson, I think it would be safer for you to keep out of my grip. If I should put the forceps on you where would you be?"

"I felt very much alarmed," declared Charlie. "And hastened to find you. I was unsuccessful and am so glad now that you are forewarned."

"You have done well, my boy," cried Blivens, heartily. "But keep dark. You shall not stay long back of these bars. Jim Blivens can go Shark Anderson and his pal Jim Benson two to one, and whip 'em to a finish. By the way! Have you found that bond yet, my boy?"

"I have not," replied Charlie, disappointedly. "I looked everywhere, through all his papers for it but could not find it. I fear it has been destroyed."

"Not so," said Blivens, positively. "That paper is in existence. I know that Shark Anderson got hold of it at the trial. He would not destroy it, for it was evidence against your father. Be sure he has it. We are in hard luck. How we will get hold of it now I do not know."

"I am sorry," said Charlie, despairingly. "Fate seems against us."

"Well, I used to think it was against me," declared Blivens. "But I've always found that some other dog was having just as hard a fight as I was. Shark Anderson has had his day, and has got to fall. We ought to be able to down him."

"I hope you may," replied Charlie.

"We will. Now, keep up a good heart, my boy. To-morrow morning I'll get you out of here, if not to-night."

"One word more," cried Charlie, eagerly. "Oh, Mr. Blivens, would it be too much to ask of you to tell my mother where I am, and all about it?"

"Will I, my boy? You can bet I will," replied Blivens, heartily.

"Thank you very much."

With this the ex-convict left the police station. Before going out he said to the sergeant:

"I would like to know the amount of bail required to liberate this boy? Unless Lawyer Anderson recalls his charge against him to-night, I shall endeavor to have him bailed."

The sergeant did not regard Blivens with much favor, but finally replied:

"I have just got word from the judge. In an offense of this kind the bond required for liberation are generally five hundred dollars."

Blivens left the station. He did not waste time, but started straight for the office of Lawyer Anderson. All the while the ex-convict's bosom was seething with a tempest of wrath and hatred.

"I'll bring him to terms," he muttered. "The idea of locking that boy up that way. Ah! Jim Anderson, I'll spoil your little game."

He soon reached Broadway and sprung up the stairs quickly to the lawyer's office. As he drew nearer the door, which he saw was ajar, some impulse prompted him to advance with caution.

He reached the door and saw that the room contained but one occupant. He gave a sudden, violent start as he recognized him.

It was Benson, the valet.

The rascally valet was in the act of opening a small closet placed high in the wainscoting of the room. Blivens stood quite still and watched him with deep interest.

It was a sort of secret repository and had escaped Charlie's eye when he searched the office. With a low muttering in an abstract way, Benson drew some papers out of the closet and proceeding to the desk bent down to examine them.

Like a shadow Blivens glided up to his shoulder and gazed upon them also. One paper from all the rest the valet had singled out, and as he laid it out upon the desk he muttered:

"Oh, that is valuable, and I think I'll take care of it. Some day Jim Anderson and I might play at cross purposes and then it would aid me. It puts him in my power. Ha-ha-ha! there are two men in the world who saw Shark Anderson forge that paper. I am one and Amos Skillings the other. Yes, I'll keep that paper for future use."

There was a light of a fearful sort in Jim Blivens' eyes, as he braced himself, and then, seizing Benson by the shoulders, hurled him across

om. The next moment the valuable paper, which was the bond, was thrust into his bosom.

"That paper is more valuable to me than to you, friend Benson," cried, loudly. "I'll take charge of that bond, for with it I intend to give Shark a sure wind up. Have you anything to say?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE STRUGGLE IN THE OFFICE.

So quickly had all this occurred that Benson was hardly able to comprehend the situation.

When he did his first startled impression was succeeded by alarm and most thorough discomfiture. It was some time before he was able to speak. Then he said huskily:

"Jim Blivens! You here!"

"It's your old friend," rejoined Blivens, coolly. "How do you like the looks of me? Don't seem very glad to see me!"

"Give me that paper."

"What for?"

"I want it."

"Sorry, but I can't oblige you."

"It is mine. Give it to me."

"Not much."

Benson's face was purple with hate and rage. He drew a deep panting breath.

"Give me that paper," he cried huskily. "If you do not, Jim Blivens, I will kill you."

The villain seemed in deadly earnest. He kicked the door shut and drew a murderous-looking knife from his bosom. He stood between the door and Blivens.

He was much heavier and seemingly Blivens was no match for him. It was a situation of most thrilling sort, and it seemed for a moment as though a tragedy was about to be enacted upon the spot.

"Now will you give me that paper?" hissed Benson. "If you do not you will die."

Blivens stood for a moment gazing intently at his former pal but now deadly enemy. He spoke coolly and without fear.

"Jake Benson, if you don't put up that knife and stand from that door, I will see that you are on the scaffold inside of a year. You know well enough that I know that which will hang you. You don't want to cross me, Benson. I always thought you was a dirty dog. I know it to be a fact now."

Benson was deadly pale, and he trembled like a leaf.

"I want that paper," he said. "It's of no use to you."

"It's of more use to me than to you," declared Blivens. "It will help me to free poor Moses Codman. Oh, you needn't sneer, Benson, I've turned over a new leaf. I've got sick of always being on the wrong side."

The surprise of Benson was beyond expression. He gazed hard at Blivens.

"What!" he exclaimed, "then you mean to show your hand, do you, Jim Blivens? You are going to turn on us?"

"Yes, I show my hand. Why do I do it? My life depends upon it. When you and the Shark plan to put me out of the way, I'd be a fool not to meet you with a good counter game, wouldn't I? Oh, you needn't start, Jake Benson. I know all about it. You thought to get rid of me; but you haven't yet, nor you never will, my fine bird. Ha, ha! I'm on to your dirty tricks. It was an evil day for you when you turned upon me."

Benson's face was contorted with mingled surprise and hate. He saw that he was exposed.

"You were a traitor," he declared. "You meant to go back on us."

"It's a case of soon versus quick. I was too quick for you. That gives me the upper grip. But there is one thing that will save you. I will give you one chance."

"What is that?" asked Benson, ironically.

"That you will leave this country, and you and Shark Anderson will both leave behind you a sworn confession clearing Moses Codman. This is fair."

"Your cheek is only exceeded by your cowardice," declared Benson, savagely. "Yes, Jim Blivens, it's a game of life and death between you and I. One of us only is to go out of this room alive. The crisis is come, and there will be no other or better chance to settle our accounts than right here. You may prepare to fight."

Benson squared his prodigious shoulders and clenched the knife in his hand. His attitude was murderous.

Blivens regarded him a moment cautiously, but without fear.

"I have no knife, Benson," he said, calmly. "You have the advantage of me."

"That is your misfortune," said the brute, with a savage grin.

"There is no honor in you," declared Blivens. "But your taking of my life will give you the hangman's noose, for I could throw open this window and shout for police."

"I thought you was a coward!" sneered Benson.

"Throw away your knife and try a fair fight, and I will refrain from calling help."

"Not much!" gritted the murderous ruffian. "I know my game, Jim Blivens. Stand up and take your deserts."

There was a steely glitter in Blivens' eyes as he retreated a step and watched his antagonist warily. He did not avail himself of the opportunity of opening the window.

The next moment one of the most terrible struggles between man and man ever placed on record took place in the office of Lawyer Anderson. Both men were strong and fought for life.

But Blivens had not the motive of murder in his heart. He thought only of disarming his opponent.

At the first collision Benson made a savage blow at Blivens with the knife. It happily missed its mark, and as his wrist was lifted Blivens caught it in an iron grip.

Round and round swang the two powerful men in that deadly struggle. It was strange that its sounds were not heard and did not bring other people to the office. But nobody came, and there consequently was no witness to the awful fight.

The desk was overturned, chairs were demolished and the floor was streaked with blood. Now the vantage lay with one, then with the other.

They puffed and panted furiously with exertion. The seconds passed into minutes, and the minutes into half an hour. Then when bone and sinews seemed to have reached its limit of endurance a chance gave the victory to Blivens.

He had succeeded in getting a back grip on Benson, and with a tremendous effort threw him heavily upon the floor. The knife point was driven into the floor where it broke and was wrenched from Benson's hand.

Blivens held his foe down with a vise like grip. The villain was unable to move.

And then with flushed faces and panting breath, the two men gazed into each others eyes savagely and with hatred.

"Who is the best man now, Jake Benson?" growled Blivens. "What have you to say to this? In spite of your knife, eh?"

"Curse you," gritted Benson.

"Spare your vile curses."

"You will take my life?"

Blivens drew a deep breath and then slightly relaxed his hold upon the other's throat. He shook his head like a bull dog.

"No, Jim Blivens has been a rough man in his life, but he never yet reddened his hands with blood. That is for such as you, Jake Benson. No, I ain't going to kill you, but I want you to do one thing for me."

"Well," growled Benson, "what is it?"

"Mind you, if you don't do it and you go back on me, I will kill you. You cannot get away from me. The world is not so wide but that I will find you."

Benson shivered and said:

"Well, what is it, Jim? You've got the upper hand, I know. Jest tell me what it is and I'll give my word to do it."

"That's business. Our kind of a man may steal and even kill, but he keeps his word, Jake."

"That's right."

"Well, now I'll tell ye what it is. When the trial comes off——"

"What trial?"

"Eh? why, I'm going to have Shark Anderson hauled over the coals, and I'm going to bring Moses Codman back to his family. The shark never was any good friend of ours. Now we can right that man's wrongs. We saw old Anderson forge that bond and we can go up and swear him black and blue. That's what I want of you. If you do it, I'll be a tolerable good friend to ye, and ye'll need a friend some

time. If you don't do it, so help me, Christopher, I'll see you to the gallows. You know I can do it, Jake Benson."

There was a moment of silence. Benson breathed hard, and gazed at his conquerer. His mind seemed made up quickly.

"Enough said," he declared gruffly. "You're the best man, Jim Blivens. I'll do it."

"You mean it?"

"Yes."

Blivens relaxed his grip, and Benson arose to his feet. The contest was ended, and the ex-convict was the victor.

"Well, what do ye want me to do?" growled Benson. "When is this trial coming off?"

"You can keep right on to work for Anderson just the same. The trial is coming off when I can get the boy out of prison. But one thing more. Who played the game on the boy?"

Benson hesitated.

"I did," he finally replied.

"Ah, you put the money in his pocket?"

"Yes."

"Well, if I can't get the boy out any other way, I may want you to put in a word for him. It can be done so that you won't be made liable at all."

"Anything you say," returned Benson, sullenly, as he began to set the office to rights.

A few moments later Blivens was on the street. He was a little sore and stiff from his struggle with Benson, but otherwise all right.

"I made a pretty stroke there," he congratulated himself. "I have fixed that brute. I don't think he will dare to go back on me. Now for the home of Mrs. Codman. She will be much worried about her boy."

Blivens boarded an up-town car. He reached the humble home of the Codmans and climbed the stairs. But he did not knock at the door.

Even as Charlie had the night before he paused at the door, checked by the sound of voices.

One voice he recognized as that of Mrs. Codman, and it was distressed but resolute. The other was that of Anderson. Blivens waited a moment to listen.

"Mrs. Codman, you can have little motherly regard for your only son, when you know that he is in prison, and the slightest word from you would safely restore him to liberty."

Mrs. Codman's voice was resolute.

"James Anderson, you have my answer once and for all. The imprisonment of my boy is a scheme of yours to force me to take a step rather than which I would die. If Charlie is in prison I shall find some good friend who will champion him. God is not unjust, he will not permit this miserable persecution which you have inflicted upon me. The world's people are not all without hearts. I will go to the judge and plead myself and I know that he will believe me, and set Charlie free. As for you, once and for all my answer is, I will never marry you. Go!"

An oath dropped from Anderson's lips.

"Confound your obstinacy," he cried. "You do not know your own welfare. Why are you so obdurate, Alice. Listen, I am a desperate man, I have sworn to win you, and I will."

"Dare not come near me. I shall scream for help," cried Mrs. Codman.

"You dare not. You will only compromise yourself. You are mine, and you cannot escape me. If you will not become mine by request I will force you to accept my offer."

Blivens heard the sound of scuffling feet and a terrifying scream from Mrs. Codman. It aroused all the manly part of his nature, and he strode forward, and not waiting to unlatch the door fiercely kicked it in.

Lawyer Anderson relaxed his grip upon Mrs. Codman, and fiercely confronted Blivens.

"What is this?" he demanded, savagely. "You here, Jim Blivens? What do you want? Get out of here!"

"Not so fast," said Blivens, coolly. "I have come to stay, at least for a while."

"You dare to interfere with me?"

"Easy, squire. Do not speak of my dare-devil proclivities. I am absolutely without fear. I dare do anything."

"What are you here for?"

"To protect this helpless woman."

Blivens stepped between Mrs. Codman and the lawyer. It was an intense moment, and worthy of an artist's brush. Mrs. Codman clasped her hands, and was mutely grateful to her new friend.

Lawyer Anderson glared at Blivens with bloodshot eyes.

"How did you come here, Jim Blivens? Did you track me?"

"That is a matter of my own," replied the imperturbable ex-convict.

"And you mean to interfere in my business?"

"In this particular case, yes."

"What do you do it for? Are you not a friend of mine?"

"No."

Lawyer Anderson started back. His eyes flashed like diamonds.

"Ungrateful dog," he hissed. "After all that I have done for you. Only the other day I saved you from going up to prison by hushing the case against you. Is this the way you repay me?"

"Not so fast, my festive friend," said Blivens, with provoking coolness. "You forget that it was no particular friendly feeling that caused you to render me that service. You were, I believe, obliged to do it."

"Obliged to do it," repeated Anderson, who was staggered by Blivens' method of attack.

"Yes, that word is not too large I believe. Now, my dear Mr. Anderson, I want to give you a little bit of advice."

"What, you preaching to me, Jim Blivens? Well, that is cool to say the least."

"Yes, I, Lawyer Anderson. To be sure I am a black sheep, but not so black as you. I never made war upon defenseless women. Nor I never will. In this case I propose to defend one. But my advice to you is to withdraw your complaint against the boy Charlie Codman."

Anderson was thunderstruck. This sudden departure of Blivens he could not account for. To see the ex-convict turning champion of the right was a stunning surprise.

"Withdraw my complaint against Charlie Codman?"

"Exactly."

"Not much. The young rascal shall be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

"I guess not."

"What?"

"I say no."

Blivens confronted Anderson with flashing eyes and clenched fists.

"I mean every word I say, Shark Anderson. It is my hand this time. Prosecute that boy for an offense of which he is innocent, and I will put you behind prison bars—ruin you before an hour. Now, what do you say?"

The lawyer cringed before Blivens' righteous wrath. It began to look as though the weak and oppressed had an indomitable champion in the ex-convict. The lawyer's change of manner was amusing.

"Well—that is—I will see," he stammered. "Of course I don't want to be hard on the boy."

"Oh, of course not," sneered Blivens. "Now look here, Mr. Shark Anderson, it is a good time for you and I to have an understanding. Sit down in that chair."

Anderson obeyed meekly, at the same time glancing apprehensively at Mrs. Codman.

"The lady will remain," said Blivens. "I have a request to make, madam. Would you kindly favor me with pen and paper."

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Codman readily, producing the articles.

"Thank you! Now, Mr. Shark Anderson, to business. You thought you were doing a great thing when you commanded your valet, Benson, to put that money in Charlie Codman's pocket."

Anderson was livid.

"Benson is false!" he hissed.

"No, Benson was not false. I only wrung the confession from him after a life or death fight. I won. Now, Mr. Shark Anderson, I have just one request to make of you. Take that pen and paper and write to the chief of police a withdrawal of your charge against him. No, you dare not refuse, or I will have you hauled up for conspiracy."

A black curse escaped Anderson.

"I didn't look for this from you, Jim Blivens," he said. "I thought you were one of us."

Blivens shrugged his shoulders.

"That is in the past tense," he replied.

Anderson hastily made out a withdrawal of his charges against Charlie. Blivens read it and nodded with satisfaction.

Then he arose and going to the door very coolly opened it.

"Shark Anderson, do you see those stairs? There is great risk of my kicking you down the whole length of them. Hurry up if you want to save yourself."

Anderson took the hint. He arose and slunk out of the door. When he had gone Blivens felt a touch upon his arm. He turned and Mrs. Codman stood before him.

There was a light of gratitude in her eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.

BLIVENS PROCURES A WARRANT.

THE two men glared at each other with a mutual and deadly hatred.

Lawyer Anderson's lean fingers worked convulsively like the claws of a vulture.

"Thank you," she said. "You are a stranger to me, but I know you are my friend."

"A stranger?" exclaimed Blivens in a hard voice. "Am I then a stranger, Mrs. Codman?"

As he spoke he removed his slouch hat and faced her. His eyes looked into hers. A moment, and then a great cry was wrung from her, and she retreated, wringing her hands wildly.

"My God! it is—it is Amos Skillings!"

"Amos Skillings," repeated Blivens, almost mournfully. "Yes, you have not forgotten me. But not the Amos Skillings of yore, Mrs. Codman, the Amos Skillings who went upon the stand and falsely swore your husband into Sing Sing, for what? To subserve the beastly ends of that hound whom I have just expelled from your house. No, believe me, Mrs. Codman, I am a different man."

Mrs. Codman came forward slowly.

"It was you who consigned me to all these years of sorrow," she said, "yet I believe you."

"And can you forgive me?"

A struggle seemed to take place in her breast.

"For what you have done for me and my boy to-night—for this reason I forgive the wrong."

"Then I am happy!" cried Blivens, joyfully. "Oh, Mrs. Codman, I am a different man from what you knew of me then. I mean to live a better life. I am doing a great work for you. I mean to atone amply for all the wrongs of the past."

"You are kind," replied Mrs. Codman. "My whole life now is centered in my boy."

"Yes," cried Blivens, "and within an hour he shall be free from his imprisonment. I must leave you now, but keep up a good heart, Mrs. Codman. There is happiness in store for you."

Before Mrs. Codman could say more her new-found friend was gone. She sank upon her knees and prayed, returning thanks for the turn in her fortune, and when she arose it was with a strange light of joy in her soul. She felt that a happy event was at hand.

This in her simplicity she believed to be the restoration of Charlie to her. That it was to be even a greater joy she did not dream.

After leaving the humble tenement Blivens sped down town as fast as he could. He went straight to police headquarters. Dashing in he presented the withdrawal written by Anderson.

"We have no power to hold the boy, then," said the chief. "Let him out of the cell, turnkey."

The iron padlocks were turned, the bars shot back, and Charlie Codman stepped out free once more. Leaving the station, he accompanied Blivens down the street toward Broadway.

"Oh, I cannot thank you enough, my dear, kind friend," he cried. "What will mother say now? She will be so grateful to you."

"I have seen your mother," said Blivens shortly.

"Seen my mother?" exclaimed Charlie with surprise. "Then you went up to the house?"

"I did."

And with this Blivens detailed all incidents to Charlie.

The boy's blood boiled as he listened to the account of Anderson's brutal threats to his mother.

"Oh, if I had only been there!" he said with clenched teeth. "It would not have been well for Lawyer Anderson."

"Never mind, my boy, you'll soon get square with him," declared Blivens. "There is a good time coming, but we have got lots of work to do first. Are you ready for it?"

"I am."

"Come on then."

"Where?"

"To the office of Judge Davis. I mean to swear out a warrant for the arrest of James Anderson. What for? Why, conspiracy on one count, forgery and criminal malfeasance for the others. And in one more day I mean to have the evidence to place Mr. Shark Anderson behind bars for twenty years. How is that?"

Charlie Codman was dumfounded.

"How—how can you do all that?" he asked.

"You will see. Come along with me."

Without further questioning Charlie followed Blivens. The ex-convict hailed a carriage. He directed the driver to take them to the residence of Judge Davis.

"We shall not find him in his office," he said. "It is too late. But I can induce him to come down and issue the warrant."

A few moments later they were at the door of the genial Judge Davis. Ushered into the house, Charlie saw that they were in the presence of a man of patrician features and a distinguished bearing. He bowed pleasantly, and said:

"Well, gentlemen, what can I do for you?"

"We would like you to issue a warrant for us," replied Blivens.

"And I think when I have laid the facts before you in entirety, you will not hesitate to grant our request."

A cloud was on the judge's brow. His most unpleasant duty was the issuing of a warrant.

"I will hear your story," he said. "Who is the offender?"

"You know him well. It is Lawyer James Anderson."

"What!" exclaimed the judge in astonishment. "What is the matter with Anderson? What has he done to you?"

"It is quite a lengthy story," said Blivens. "But I have a good case, and can procure oceans of evidence."

"That is all that is necessary."

"Then first, I wish to present to you this boy," said Blivens, leading Charlie forward. "You remember Moses Codman, don't you?"

"I do," replied the judge, warmly. "I always felt bad for Codman; but he is dead."

"No."

"What?"

"He is alive, and this is his son."

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Judge Davis. "He did not serve his sentence in Sing Sing?"

"No," replied Blivens. "He made his escape and is now at large, or at least where I could produce him at the right moment. Ah, Judge Davis, he was a much wronged man. He was never guilty of that forgery. Lawyer Anderson was the forger and the cause of Moses Codman's ruin."

Judge Davis stared at Blivens in the sheerest of amazement. He was as yet incredulous.

"I never heard a suspicion of such a thing before," he said. "Are you quite sure of all this, my man? Have you proof of an indisputable sort?"

"I have," declared Blivens, firmly. "I can prove to your Honor in court that Anderson is entitled to twenty years in prison for conspiracy, forgery and the vilest breach of friendship ever recorded."

"You will swear to this?"

"I solemnly swear."

"Enough," said the judge, "I will execute the instrument at once, and Chief Warren will serve it within an hour."

After a few further preliminaries Jim Blivens with Charlie left the house. Upon the street, Charlie, who was in a fog as to how Blivens was going to support all these charges against Anderson, asked:

"Where are we going now?"

"We are going into the country."

"What for?" asked Charlie, in surprise.

"A purpose which, no doubt will please you," said Blivens, quickly.

"I am going to take you to your father."

CHAPTER IX.

RE-UNITED AT LAST.

CHARLIE CODMAN was overwhelmed with a sudden wave of joy. He could hardly believe his senses.

"Do you really mean that?" he asked wildly. "You are not joking, Mr. Blivens?"

"No," replied Blivens, seriously. "I was never so much in earnest in my life. I am going to take you to your father."

"Oh! I can hardly realize it," cried Charlie, in a transport of delight. "Where is he, Mr. Blivens?"

"Not but a very little ways from New York," said Blivens. "Ah! here is a livery stable. I will procure a team here, and we will drive out to Westchester. On the way I will tell you a little story, my boy."

Filled with wonderment as to what was coming, Charlie held his peace. Blivens had little difficulty in procuring a roomy vehicle and good horse, and at a brisk pace they drove into the outskirts of the city.

It was now about the hour of nine in the evening. Darkness had settled down quite thickly, but after passing through Harlem and gaining the White Plains road, Blivens began his story.

"If you remember, Charlie," he said concisely, "I told you of your father's wonderful escape from Sing Sing under the name of Arnold."

"Yes," replied Charlie.

"I also told you that he came at once to New York and went to Anderson, whom he believed was his friend."

"You did."

"Then I will begin my story here. Your father believed Anderson was his friend and revealed his personality to him at the risk of again being returned to prison. Undoubtedly, Anderson could have done this, but the villain had another plan, which his scheming brain had invented.

"It occurred to him that it would best subserve his interests to allow the impression to remain that your father was really dead.

"Yet he desired him out of the way. Fixing upon a scheme, he hired Benson and I to help him. Your father was decoyed into a room in Anderson's house and we overpowered him. Then he was carried a prisoner to the asylum of Dr. Denbow, a rascally keeper of insane patients near White Plains. There he has been a prisoner ever since."

"Great Heaven!" gasped Charlie. "That was an infamous thing to do. My poor father! It would be terrible had he indeed went insane himself during this time?"

"No, your father is all right and in good health, though he has suffered much," replied Blivens. "I have paid him many visits and it is partly my sympathy for him that has led me to adopt a better life. His hair is white as driven snow, though he is not an old man. But he will soon be given his rights after all these years of oppression."

Charlie was filled with horror and sympathy for his dear father. He understood all now. He had heard of many similar cases of people being confined in an insane asylum for years, by designing enemies. He knew that it was often a fate worse than death.

The horse could not go fast enough for him, and it seemed an eternity before they came to a gloomy old mansion, back from the country road, and after traversing miles of dark forest roads.

"Here we are," cried Blivens as they passed under an archway and drove up to the door.

A dark, forbidding doorway was dimly lighted with a swinging lamp. Passing beneath this Charlie and Blivens approached the door and the latter pulled the heavy knocker.

An answer came almost immediately. The door swung back and a tall muscular man with German cast of features and wearing eyeglasses was before them. He regarded the visitors critically and then exclaimed:

"Upon my soul. It is Amos Skillings. Glad to see ye, Amos. Walk in."

"Yes, it is Amos Skillings, Dr. Denbow," said Blivens, as he and Charlie passed into the hall. "Thought I'd come up and see you."

"That's right," declared the insane asylum manager. "I'm glad to see yer. Yer man is all right an' handsome. Ain't heard from the Shark for a good while. What's this? got a new patient?"

With this the doctor eyed Charlie. The boy recoiled, while a cold chill traversed his backbone.

"Oh, no," laughed Blivens. "Only a friend of mine. That's all. Thought I'd bring him up on a visit."

"Oh, I see," said the doctor, carelessly. "Well, he'll see funny sights here. Want to see your man, I suppose. By the way, what's the matter with Shark? Ain't heard from him for a good while."

Blivens cunningly simulated a look and air of mystery. He lowered his voice to a sibilant whisper.

"That's what I'm here for to-night, Denbow. The Shark is in a peck of trouble."

The asylum manager started back and his face paled a trifle.

"What is it about?" he asked. "I hope it don't involve me."

"Well, it ain't just yet," intimated Blivens. "But there's no doubt but that the Shark has got to give up. There has been a gang onto him for a year and they're doing him up."

"You don't mean it?"

"But I do, the woods are full of detectives, and they have tracked Moses Codman right to this very door——"

"The devil!" ejaculated Denbow, almost fiercely, as he grasped Blivens' wrist. "Do you mean to say that they've got me mixed up in it?"

"I think they have."

"Curses," hissed the other. "It will be my ruin. They will hang me. I told the Shark how it would be. I wish I had never taken his men. Confound it, it don't pay."

"Easy," said Blivens. "The Shark don't mean that you shall suffer greatly by it."

"What do you mean?"

"There is no time to lose. The man has got to be taken away from here. I am here for that purpose."

There was a moment of silence. Dr. Denbow's face brightened.

"All right," he muttered. "I am glad to get rid of him. Where will you take him?"

"I cannot tell even you."

"Well, I don't care. How will you take him away?"

"I have got a team at the door. If he is properly manacled I can handle him. Give me the keys and I will go and get him. You don't even need to know anything about it."

Denbow took a bunch of keys from his girdle. He gave them to Blivens.

"Take them," he said. "I am glad to get rid of him. You know the cell, No. 29, down that passage. I will leave this door open."

With this Denbow vanished into an inner room. Blivens' subterfuge had worked like a charm. He pressed Charlie's hand.

"Go back and get into the wagon," he said.

Charlie obeyed. Blivens went down the corridor to cell 29. There was a clanking of chains, and a man in tattered garments and wan, haggard face, with white flowing hair, came forward and pressed his face against the bars.

"Well, Moses Codman," said Blivens. "I have come up to see you."

"Oh, it is you, Jim Blivens," said the captive in a voice of disappointment. "My long hoped-for rescue will never come."

He was about to turn wearily away when Blivens, in a low, tense voice, said:

"Hist! keep a cool head. Moses Codman, I have come to take you away. Be guarded, for your hour of deliverance is at hand."

A mighty spasm seemed to sway the captive. Then he came up to the bars again.

"Do not tantalize me," he cried. "If you do I shall really go mad."

"I am telling you the truth," said Blivens, undoing the bars of the door.

Then, in a few curt sentences he laid the whole truth before Moses Codman. The shock was great, but he bore it manfully and suffered himself to be led out of the cell and to the carriage, where Charlie was awaiting them.

"Now not a word from either of you," cried Blivens, "until we get back to the city."

Away down the White Plains road toward New York sped the good horse. Not until they were in the city limits did Blivens slacken speed. Within two hours after leaving the Asylum, Blivens drew rein at the door of the tenement house in East Twentieth street.

It was an hour past midnight, but Charlie saw a light burning in the top story. He sped up the stairs like a squirrel and burst into the room to find his mother in an agony of woe, walking the floor and wringing her hands despairingly.

"My son, at last," she cried joyfully, as Charlie rushed into her arms. "Oh, this a great joy. You are safe."

"Safe, mother, safe," cried Charlie. "And oh, prepare yourself for a great joy. Something wonderful is going to happen."

Was it a prescience told Mrs. Codman the truth? She heard the

footsteps on the stairs, two men came into the room. One with white beard and hair, though not old face.

"Moses, my husband!" she screamed, and fainted in the arms of him to whom a merciful Providence had restored her after years of suffering and patient toil.

We cannot fitly dwell upon the happiness of that reunion. We are inadequate to depict it.

All, even Blivens, wept with joy. All the past was reviewed. Moses Codman reveled in his wife's and son's caresses, and a great glory seemed all about them.

But in the midst of it all a sudden chilling thought seemed to come to him. He sprang up, and gazed about him in a hunted way.

"But I have forgotten. I am yet a fugitive from the law. Oh, to go back to Sing Sing would be a scarcely less evil than to have remained in that asylum."

But Blivens stepped forward, and put a hand upon his arm.

"Be quiet, my good friend," he said. "There is nothing to fear. You are safe. To-morrow will prove your innocence. The man who wronged you is behind prison bars."

"James Anderson!" cried Moses Codman. "Yes, he is the man who wronged me most foully. But what is this you say? He is behind prison bars? For what?"

"For forgery," replied Blivens.

"Forgery!"

"Yes."

"Of what?"

"This."

Blivens drew from his breast the bond, and spread it out before Moses Codman, who gazed at it and reeled back, crying:

"That is what sent me to Sing Sing. That is the very bond. Where did you get it?"

"In James Anderson's office," replied Blivens.

"But—but it stands against me yet."

"No."

"Why not?"

"James Anderson forged the names upon that bond. There are two men alive to-day who saw him do it."

"My God! That would clear me!" cried Moses Codman. "Who are those men?"

"Myself and Jake Benson."

"And you mean to unmask him?"

"I do. That is why I have caused him to be arrested and imprisoned," replied Blivens.

Moses Codman sank upon his knees, and turned his streaming eyes Heavenward.

"God, I thank thee," he cried, earnestly. "Thou wilt never forsake the righteous. It is all Thy mercy. I thank Thee humbly."

It was a happy household in those early morning hours. Despite the hour Mrs. Codman spread a repast of good sort upon the table and all partook of it.

The Codmans truly had reason to feel very grateful to Jim Blivens. But for his kind efforts and revelations, the end might never have been brought about.

"You are our true friend, Mr. Blivens," declared Charlie. "Your kindness we can never repay."

"I am already repaid," declared Blivens. "I have not felt so free hearted since I was a child of ten years. Such a feeling is ample reward."

Then the chances of the trial were discussed, which led Blivens to the remark:

"You should be quite a lawyer by this time, Charlie."

"Oh, yes," replied our hero. "I have quite a good knowledge of Blackstone. Indeed Mr. Anderson told me that but for my youth I might readily be admitted at the bar."

"As I understand it a man has a right to conduct his own case in any event. He can always make his own defense."

"That is true."

"Then, my boy, I want you to conduct our case before Judge Davis to-morrow, and also make the plea. I will be on hand with the evidence and we will whip the enemy."

Charlie was transported with the idea. To plead a case in court was the height of his ambition. He determined to undertake the enterprise.

"I will do it," he cried.

"Good!" cried Blivens, with a hearty laugh. "Mr. Codman, you were once the greatest financier of your circle. You will now see that your son will yet become a peer in his profession of law. Is not that the height of your ambition, Charlie?"

"What, to become a lawyer?" asked his father.

"Yes," replied Charlie, enthusiastically. "I am going to become a lawyer. I like the profession, father. Is it not a good one?"

"It is," replied Mr. Codman, heartily. "And we shall have an opportunity of seeing to-morrow just how much of a lawyer you will make."

"You will see," said Charlie, earnestly. "Prepare yourselves for a great surprise. It will be the debut of a second Rufus Choate."

CHAPTER X.

CHARLIE WINS HIS FIRST CASE IN COURT.

LAWYER ANDERSON went to his home after his humiliating expulsion from Mrs. Codman's house by Jim Blivens.

His breast seethed with malignant, murderous motives. Curses loud and deep escaped his lips, and he vowed dire vengeance upon Jim Blivens.

"traitor!" he hissed. "I will come square with you, if I have to devote my whole life to the task."

In this state of mind he reached his home, but he was not deterred to remain there. He determined to spend the night at his office. "I will find a way," he muttered. "The game shall yet be mine. I must silence Jim Blivens. Benson is the man to do that. If he does not do it, then I will."

He took a Broadway car and it seemed an age before he finally reached his office. To his surprise as he mounted the stairs, he saw a light there.

"To be sure," he muttered, "I left Benson there some hours ago to await my return. This was stupid of me, but it is well that he is here, I want to see him."

He reached the door of the office and pushed it open. The sight which rewarded his gaze astonished him.

The chairs all showed signs of a smashup, two being completely demolished, and the desk was overhauled. Papers were strewn upon the floor, and in the midst of it all sat Benson with pallid face and groaning with pain, while holding on to his side with both hands.

He did not seem to heed the lawyer as he entered.

"What on earth is all this?" cried the astounded Anderson. "What have you been doing with things, Benson?"

"Don't ask me that," whined the villain. "I am near dead with pain. Go and get a doctor. I think my ribs are smashed."

"Your ribs smashed, you fool," howled the lawyer. "Speak and tell me. What have you been doing here since I went away?"

He sprang forward and twined his fingers about Benson's throat.

"Now tell me the truth or I'll kill you," he hissed.

"Yes, oh, yes," cried the terrified villain. "I'll tell you all about it."

"Well, what is it, then?"

"Jim Blivens did it."

"Blivens? Has he been here?"

"Yes."

A deep curse broke from Anderson's throat. He leaped up and looked about the room. Then he sprang to the secret closet. He opened it and looked within. When he saw that the papers were gone, he blackened the air with his profanity.

"Tell me the truth!" he hoarsely cried. "I've a mind to kill you, Jake Benson. Has Blivens got that bond?"

"Yes," replied the villain. "And he's going to show you up. Oh, I guess it's all up with us, and we'd better get out of the country."

Anderson stood for a moment like one in a daze. He could hardly realize the catastrophe. At first he would not believe it.

"You are not deceiving me, Jake Benson?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Before God I am not!" protested Benson. "I fought fer ye."

Then he detailed his struggle with Blivens, to which Anderson listened with dismay.

"Only one thing will save us, Jake Benson," he said, darkly.

"What is that?" asked the villain, arousing from his stupor.

"Jim Blivens must be taken care of to-night. Whether we can do it or not, I do not know. Can I depend on you?"

Benson seemed to forget his broken ribs with a little more than warrantable haste. He sprang up crying:

"I am with ye, squire. We can down him if we can find him."

"It is our only chance."

Anderson drew a pistol from his pocket and examined it. Then as he was about satisfied, he turned to leave the office. Benson was by his side.

But the murderous expedition was never consummated. At that moment footsteps were heard in the outer corridor, and two burly police officers came into the room.

Without a word one placed his hand upon Anderson's shoulder and said:

"James Anderson, we have a warrant for your arrest."

"A warrant for my arrest?" and the room grew dizzy to the baffled lawyer. Then he recovered and said incredulously:

"Let me see your warrant."

The officer produced the paper, and Anderson with consummate cunning said:

"I will go with you. But first I wish to secure a bondsman."

"Impossible," replied the officer. "Judge Davis said that you were not to be admitted to bail. We must do our duty."

"This is infamous!" gritted Anderson, savagely. "Oh, Jim Blivens, you shall pay for this treachery."

But he was led out of the office and away to be locked up in a cell for the night. It was the sealing of James Anderson's doom. His wicked career had reached its end.

For some moments after Anderson had been taken away Jake Benson stood terrified in the office. Then he muttered:

"Whew. Pretty narrow escape for me. I guess I'd better stick by Jim Blivens. If I don't I may go up, too. It's always best to be on the safe side."

The next morning the whole city was excited with the intelligence that James Anderson had been arrested and imprisoned for conspiracy and forgery. Hints of the wrong done Moses Codman years previous got about, and the most intense interest was created.

Judge Davis had set an early hour the next day for the hearing. The court room was crowded to its fullest capacity to hear Jim Blivens bring in evidence to convict Anderson of the charges against him.

To the surprise of Blivens Anderson had many friends, people who did not believe that his honor could be assailed.

The clerk opened the court with the customary exercises, and then

the witnesses were duly sworn, and first of all friends of Anderson were put upon the stand to swear to his integrity and honor.

After this the young counsel for the prosecution, no other than Charlie Codman, opened his case, and first of all called Mrs. Codman to the stand.

She testified that she was the wife of Moses Codman, who was reported to have died in Sing Sing. To the best of her knowledge her husband had not forged the bond.

The next witness was Blivens.

"Mr. Blivens," said the young lawyer, "you were formerly in Mr. Anderson's employ?"

"I was," replied Blivens.

"What did your duties consist of?"

"The carrying out of any dirty work that Mr. Anderson saw fit to give me."

"That is, you did his dishonest work."

"Yes."

"Were you ever convicted of any such thing?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because he was a lawyer, and could always get me out of the scrape."

"Ah! did he employ you in any way to effect the ruin of Moses Codman?"

The counsel for the defense here objected, but the court ruled the question allowable, and Blivens created a sensation by replying:

"He did."

"In what particular case?"

"He employed me and also Jake Benson to go about defaming Mr. Codman's character."

"Was that the only case?"

"No; we were both witnesses to the forging of the bond. We both swore falsely at the trial that Mr. Codman was the forger. The real truth was that Mr. Anderson himself forged the bond."

A loud murmur ran through the room. This was a most astounding bit of evidence.

"Will Benson swear to that, too?"

"Yes."

Benson was here brought forward and corroborated Blivens' story. Then Charlie resumed:

"Now, Mr. Blivens, tell the whole story of my father's escape from Sing Sing."

This Blivens did in a loud, clear voice. It is needless to say that everybody listened spell-bound.

"Mr. Codman alive and imprisoned in an insane asylum! How horrible!" was the general exclamation.

After Blivens had finished the door of a side room opened, and a man, white-haired, but recognizable to many, came out. It was Moses Codman, and his appearance brought a loud cheer from the crowd in the court-room.

He was put upon the stand, and gave his evidence. It was most sweeping and conclusive. He was the last to testify, and then the brief trial was ended with the arguments of the counsel.

People who heard it that day marveled at the eloquence and depth of Charlie Codman's plea. It held court and spectators spellbound to the end. Nothing like it had been heard in that room for many days. That one so young should be so gifted seemed wonderful indeed. A round of congratulating remarks succeeded it. All the sympathy was now with the young law student.

A hush like that of the tomb fell upon the court-room as the judge gave his decision. It was logical and forcible.

"This is an uncommon case of villainy," he said. "That a man, blessed with God's image, should so harshly put his hand against his brother is a heinous crime akin to murder. While no statute prescribes a similar punishment, the law fortunately does provide a sentence of sufficient length to give the offender plenty of time for reflection upon his crime. The prisoner is found guilty. I will pronounce sentence to-morrow."

There was a momentary hush in the court-room. Then the stillness was broken by a terrible sound. The quick, sharp click of a revolver smote upon the air, and all saw James Anderson sink to the floor, a smoking pistol in his hand.

"I played a hard game and lost it," was all he said, as he lay back in the arms of a court officer and expired. Death had cheated the prison of its victim.

He was little mourned, and expiated a dark crime in a dreadful manner.

Now that the fortunes of the Codmans begun to mend there seemed no limit to their luck. Mr. Codman recovered a part of his property and engaged in a lucrative business. The family to-day are one of the happiest and best respected in New York. Cleared of the dark stain of disgrace, though it had required years to bring it about, Moses Codman was received into his old circles with open arms.

And we must not forget the reformed convict Blivens. No case was made out against either he or Benson for complicity with Anderson. Benson buried himself in the wilds of the West where it was reported he began a new life.

While Blivens, faithful Jim, became Charlie Codman's assistant and collector. Jim has done well and now has a home, having married happily.

While Charlie Codman, now a brilliant young lawyer, often recalls those dark days when he was only an errand boy with a thrill of quite pardonable emotion.

[THE END.]

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